

WATAC INC REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

JUNE 2011 – MAY 2012

In 2011 the WATAC AGM was held in the Waratah Room at NSW Parliament House on 22nd June at 3pm following our annual Luncheon. As usual, this Luncheon was a vital, well-attended event. Ilona Lee, an active member of the Jewish community was our inspiring speaker and her theme was, 'A Voice We Need to Hear'.

Ever since we decided to hold our AGM in the Waratah Room it has been extremely well-attended which is very satisfactory. At last year's AGM we viewed an online interview with Jules Hart, the producer of *'Pink Smoke Over the Vatican'*. This DVD has now been made available to the public and many WATAC-ers have copies, thanks to Helen Coles work. Some groups have undertaken to view and discuss it and have been enthused by the experience.

The highlight of 2011 was our WATAC Conference, 'Illumination in Darkness' held in September at Canterbury Turf Club Conference Centre. Patricia Fresen, a Catholic woman Bishop, was our brilliant keynote speaker. Margaret Hinchey's session 'Seeing with New Eyes' also inspired and challenged all, as did the Q & A panel facilitated brilliantly by Anne Lane. The panel members are clearly prophets for our day: Rosemary Breen, Margaret Finlay, Phil Glendenning, Marilyn Hatton, Lisa Lyndon and Greg Reynolds.

Patricia Fresen did much more than speak at the WATAC Conference; she was in Australia for over three weeks and spoke with various groups in Canberra, Inverell, Kiama and Melbourne as well as in Sydney. One participant captured Patricia's contribution thus, "Patricia's life demonstrates that the Church has everything to gain by accepting women priests. Her faith and humanity have illuminated the darkness so that others may walk in the light."

The Eastern Suburbs WATAC Group extended their hospitality to Patricia Fresen for two days following the Conference and this gave her an opportunity to get a sense of Sydney and its beauty. One result of this inter-action is that they have developed a plan to establish a supportive connection with Patricia whereby she could continue an on-going relationship via the internet with interested, committed WATAC-ers, if these WATAC-ers were prepared to financially and personally support Patricia in her ongoing work to facilitate the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church.

WATAC was invited to a meeting in Melbourne on 21st January 2012 of several committed grassroots Catholic groups actively interested in Church reform. Maree Kennedy and Bernice Moore attended on behalf of WATAC. Other groups present included Catholics for Ministry, Inclusive Catholics and Catholics for Renewal. This is an on-going network with a further meeting planned for the end of May in Canberra.

At the 2011 WATAC AGM it was reported that Rosemary Breen had represented WATAC at the International Conference of WOW (Women's Ordination Worldwide) in France. Since then WATAC has kept in touch, and now Margaret Day and Judi Powe have undertaken to be contact persons on WATAC's behalf.

During the year WATAC has been very supportive of Bishop William Morris who has obviously been unjustly treated by the institutional Church in his dismissal from leadership of the Toowoomba diocese. We have used the Newsletter to keep people informed re his situation and have also kept in touch with him personally. Bishop Morris has enthusiastically agreed to speak to WATAC in the Theatre in Parliament House the evening of 12th September, 2012.

The WATAC Newsletter, which is our key communication medium, continues to be produced four times a year thanks to the work of Helen Coles, Margaret Knowlden and Bernice Moore. The mail-out, hands-on work, is done by Janet Cain, Kaye Hodge and Alma Madden. Without these wonderful women this great source of information and communication would not be so seamlessly available to all WATAC-ers.

Helen Coles arranges the updates of the WATAC Website with our webmaster, Jason Rhodes. Patricia Fresen's keynote address from the Conference is available on the resources page along with other papers from other Conferences and Luncheons. We are grateful to Maureen Short for the wonderful photos she takes at our events so we can share the joy with all our members via the photo galleries.

In June 2012 WATAC has organised one of our regular Inter-Faith symposiums in the Theatre of NSW Parliament House for year 11 and 12 students. After consulting with schools to ascertain their needs from these events we have been fortunate to get Mick Gooda, the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, to add an Indigenous voice to this forum which also includes three women from Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions. There will be another such event on 14th November 2012.

WATAC is most vitally alive within its local groups; they meet regularly in people's homes. These people gather to reflect, discuss, pray, dream, challenge each other and undertake action on significant issues within and beyond our Church. Last week, on 30th April, a group gathered in Kiama to have a 'Reflection Day' based on the film *'Of Gods and Men'* – what a meaningful event it was! The process for this day was formulated and facilitated by Bernice Moore and Marie Milne; with the work already done to prepare this it could well be used by other groups if they too would like to arrange such a 'Reflection Day' with Bernice.

Behind every WATAC event, celebration and gathering is the WATAC Inc Working Committee. They meet regularly to talk, think, plan, imagine possibilities and decide what to do, how to do it, and who will do it. This past year the WATAC Inc Committee members are Lynette Allen, Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Alma Madden, Bernice Moore, Helen O'Brien and Judi Powe. Maureen Watterson is our Treasurer and Helen Coles is the Administrative Officer. WATAC owes them all endless thanks; they are the engine room of WATAC activity.